

INSIGHT

The Netherlands



Fear of missing out: a digital age phenomenon or timeless human fear



Through the content creator's lens: raw reality



On the edge of losing control in the shadow of FOMO



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Creating a welcoming space for those who feel the constant pressure to keep up with the curated lives of others and the weight of social media influence. In a world where it has become an integral part of our lives, shaping our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and caught up in the never-ending stream of information.

Recognising the difficulties that individuals face in this digital age, where it's easy to be consumed by the fear of missing out (FOMO). We seek to redefine how we interact and engage with social platforms, navigate the digital landscape, and learn to embrace life in all its richness without succumbing to the pressures of FOMO. Our mission transcends the conventional; we strive to empower individuals by orchestrating a profound shift in perspective. While FOMO may linger, our objective is to demonstrate that it can be met with resilience and transformed into a force for positive change.

**FOR THOSE
FEELING
PRESSURED BY
THE SUGGESTIONS
OF HOW LIFE
MIGHT BE PERFECT**

Contents

6



Tracing the interplay

Is FOMO, a prominent aspect of the human experience, solely a product of the digital age? Connecting the dots between the human psyche and the characteristics of fear that transcend generations.

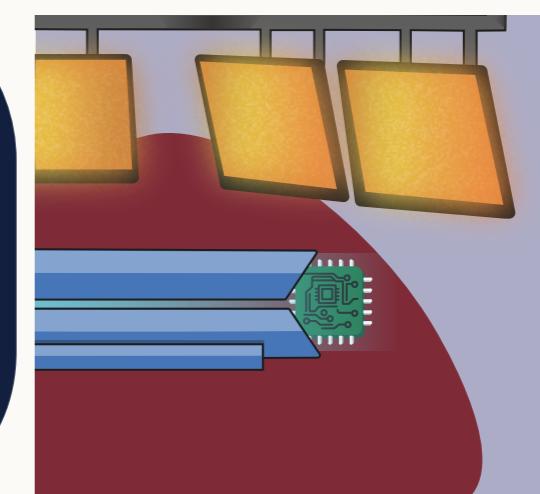
Author: Barbare Saikodze



Navigating FOMO : through the content creator's lens

Unveiling the world of FOMO through the eyes of a 20-year-old content creator. The raw story of navigating fear in the digital age.

20



What's the hurry about

A dream-like queer love story. Jose Argus is facing the challenge of losing control of her life when falling in love, all amid the backdrop of a pervasive fear of missing out.

Author: Freya Willems

26

The contributors

Author biographies of the INSIGHT team.

Author: Fleur van der Rijken

29

Credits page

List of the materials used in the magazine and their creators.

Authors: The team



FOSTERING THE FEAR
OF MISSING OUT IN
MODERN DAYS

Tracing the interplay

Amidst constant engagement with digital narratives and the relentless quest for validation and comparison, the fear of missing out has emerged as a prominent aspect of modern society. But is therefore FOMO solely a product of the digital age, or has it always been a thread weaving through the human experience? Connecting the dots between the human psyche and the aspects of fear that transcend generations.

Caught up in the “perceived obligation” to have a constantly updated and complete social media representation of us and the pressure to keep up with the curated lives of others, the ubiquitous part of the human experience, commonly known as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), finds a way into our lives. The persistent feeling of restlessness and lack, unceasing thoughts about an infinite number of things you could be doing in life, things you are missing out on. The overuse of social networking platforms certainly triggers the commonness of the phenomenon. But is therefore FOMO a young person’s game? Could it be that the given problem was absent in the lives of the previous generation? And is there a way one could cope with it?

“Cherish every moment and live life to its fullest,” they said. The subject of numerous TED talks. The topic of how life is short; how time passes us by like a speedy train with somewhere important to be. Primitive words when you hear them, but why does it seem like a tough task nowadays to do exactly that—to

enjoy every day spent with no feelings of lack or regret? Is it some sort of disease, or why is it that no matter what we do, it is insufficient?

FOMO, an acronym for the fear of missing out, is most certainly not a new occurrence but rather a real and common thread weaving through the human experience. As defined in the dictionary by psychologists, it is a “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent.” To clarify, fear is an emotional response to the belief that there is always something better one could be doing or someplace better to be. The perception is that somewhere out there, people are living more satisfying lives, that with every second going by, important opportunities are being missed, and the chances of making memories are getting wasted. This comes from the circumstance that most people measure their capabilities and potential by comparing them to another person’s life and the experiences they have had.

In the modern world, when it comes to having opportunities, we do not

RESULT OF THE DIGITAL AGE OR NOT?

create barriers for ourselves, and consequently, the number of things we could be potentially missing out on is constantly growing. If you really think about it, there are an unmeasurable number of ways that your life can develop; you can take numerous paths, each leading to different consequences. So, there is no doubt about the fact that having countless choices makes it hard not to feel regret after deciding to pursue a specific course of action. Simply put,

the infiniteness of possibilities increases the amount of loss. In today's world, each of us has so many options that no matter what we do, we are and will be missing out on something. After acknowledging how much you can make out of your life,



the constant pursuit of optimal decisions frequently results in a clear recognition of the potential chances that have been missed.

What exacerbates this realisation is the pervasive influence of social media. It is heightening your emotions and proving or making you believe that what you are actually missing out on is a lot. Thanks to digital networking platforms, we find ourselves confronted with the thought: am I doing enough? Am I where I should be in terms of life? This unending uncertainty is the most unpleasant aspect that acts as a catalyst for developing the fear of missing out. The fear we all may have but struggle to admit.

In the digital world, people get exposed to various types of content daily, which makes our loss clearly visible. But what is it exactly about social media that may alter

our state of mind and trigger us by causing significant emotional stress? Let us begin with content creators and influencers, people that many envy. Yes, we do see the lavish life they are living, and yes, from afar, it does seem perfect. But one must remind themselves that what we see delivered on their online profiles is one perfect take from a thousand shots, cropped a thousand times, and edited for numerous hours so that the artificially created scenery does not seem so artificial anymore but instead as candid as possible. With those pictures, they are trying their best to make their lives seem natural, as if the moments they are trying to capture have truly been enjoyed and experienced to their fullest. These are the people whose job it is to spend hours and hours perfecting their content, which will get posted on social media platforms and will turn into

something that deepens a person's fear and, in a way, proves to them that they certainly are missing out on a lot in their lives. This is exactly where the toxicity of social networks comes from. People are combining idealised moments in one post, framing reality in a pretended, ingenuine way, and showing us the best, wisely picked variations of what one could take out of life.

But if technology is such a big contributing factor in us experiencing FOMO, is it right to think that this problem was absent in the previous generation? The answer to this question is simply no. We also should absolutely note that social media was not the cause of this issue. According to Tiko Goguadze, a Georgian neuropsychologist and gestalt therapist for children and adolescents, the fear of missing out is not something that was brought to us because of the present or modern world. It is just that the digital networking platform has made this so-called problem more visible. As she mentions, it acted as a magnifying glass, and instead of blaming it for creating this issue, we should acknowledge that in reality, it exacerbated our perceptions of having the fear that we are not doing enough in life and that we can never be fully fulfilled no matter the experiences we have had. Because the paradox with

FOMO is that there is always an infinite number of other things you could be missing out on. It's not completely the fault of social media that this problem is so widely spread, since people with fear

have always been there. Humans, no matter the time, have always had the feeling that they would be happier or more satisfied had they been in a different state in their lives. Networking platforms just zoomed in on this phenomenon; they made us

see every little detail about others, which resulted in a constant need to measure up and compare. On digital sharing platforms, we are bound to see things people have that we might feel like we lack. It brought us to envy, which makes you feel that somewhere with some people life is better and you are in a miserable position.

The shadow cast by FOMO has been with humans for a long time, but exactly social media made our consciousness more alarmed about the fact that this shadow is actually there. As explained by the psychologist, people who get influenced by the content on the internet and therefore develop this fear could have common characteristics. These are





MISSING OUT



the humans who do not have enough courage to try out new things and face new challenges, eventually leading them to their fulfilment. Media influencers and their content have the potential to negatively affect a person whose self-esteem is low, who already perceives themselves as not enough in various aspects, a person whose mind is already so wrapped up in thoughts that they aren't able to live life to its fullest, as in their opinion others do. "One's self-perception directly affects their susceptibility to FOMO," states Tiko.

The overuse of social networking is a huge contributing factor in aggravating an already tense relationship between us and our fears. The problem with current society and the modern world is that it has more channels than ever to foster FOMO; it is almost an inevitable danger. How screen time indicators are going up and up daily shows that we are bound to fall deep into the dark hole of the internet and let it hinder us from enjoying the present moments. As suggested by the psychologist, a social

network is merely a medium, a tool that unfortunately makes this problem more noticeable. The pain and struggles of previous and current generations are plagiarised from the same source, but there are differences in major changes in society's perception and individual perspective on this occurrence.

In the past, people did not have such detailed information about what was going on outside of their so-called bubbles. They could not fully imagine what was happening in different circles other than their own. People back then may have known or understood that they could have been happier, had they been in other situations, or had they done more with their days, weeks, and lives, but they could not completely visualise what it was exactly that they were missing out on. The absence of web-based social platforms did not give them the chance to know. Whereas compared to today, when every minute of one's life is shared, one knows exactly what to worry about. "The visuals are one of the most triggering and irritating things for our minds," says the psychologist. Consequently, when we think about it, the question arises: because of the non-existence of social networks, are the ones from earlier

generations less affected by FOMO, and therefore, does it seem like an easy thing to deal with or even live with? To this question, Tiko Goguadze answers: "When you are not capable of visualising every aspect of other people's lives and what they may be up to without having proof, something for our eyes, the chances of you being influenced and pressured by it are seemingly slim. But when a person can access that information by single-clicking on an app icon, there is a high possibility of them feeling tension and anxiety, resulting in them developing the fear." In the preceding generations, one did not have a visual representation of what could have been done in their lives right in front of their eyes. Nowadays, we are not only visualising but, at the same time,





THE PARADOX WITH FOMO IS THAT WE WILL ALWAYS MISS OUT ON SOMETHING



This human condition is inevitable, which sounds frightening because FOMO may seem incurable, but there is a way to break the cycle, and it is by controlling what we emphasise in life," states the psychologist. This may come off as cliché, but one has to start looking within themselves and not at others when it comes to fulfilment. When a person is so tuned in to the, in their opinion, "better versions of life," they risk losing their sense of self; they risk actually missing out on what is in front of them while in pursuit of a better, happier, and more exciting life, which in fact is just an illusion solely cleverly crafted for social media. The comparison is unfair if we put real life up against a fake one. The key to letting go of fear is the word "attention."

No one can deny that each of us has things that make us anxious in our lives—bad things that cause us stress—but they don't usually bother us if we consciously don't focus on them. It's a matter of choice how we allocate our attention, and it directly affects our behaviour while also determining our happiness. "One way to cope with FOMO is by shifting our concentration from negative things and attending to the now. By doing this, we'll hinder ourselves from getting caught in the loop of this fear and tune in to the real world, the world that is right in front of us," explains Tiko Goguadze. Do not try too hard to make this fear go away, because that will

result in it occupying your whole mind, which will make everything worse. Instead of turning to social media and constantly scrolling and comparing, remember that the thing you are actually missing out on is your own life. This perception of life is something we all have to learn. While this opinion is indeed overused, it's still worth mentioning once again that gratitude and contemplation are absolutely necessary because they change our outlook on life by one hundred and eighty degrees. If we enable ourselves to have the frame of mind where we feel constant lack and structure our feelings as if we are always missing out on something, when we're





young, it may seem as though everyone went through that John Hughes college movie except us, but the truth is lots of people are probably feeling the same, and there's a comfort in that; in the fact that we are all on the same team, no matter the age, the generation, or the time. Keep this in mind:

Do not fear you'll lose the memories that haven't been made yet. Take your eyes off the screen and look around. And when the time comes where an opportunity is presented to you, keep an open mind. There is no chance of feeling a lack of experiencing life to its fullest or fear that somewhere you are missing out on better situations if you are truly doing things that make you content. Well, at least that's what Ferris Bueller did, and wasn't he living a fulfilled life, unencumbered by the fear of missing out?!

"THAT PERPETUAL NEED TO BE DOING SOMETHING KEEPS US FROM ENJOYING THE PRESENT MOMENT AND IMPEDES US FROM ACHIEVING OUR GOALS"

Author: Barbare Saikodze

EVERY FRIDAY ON SPOTIFY

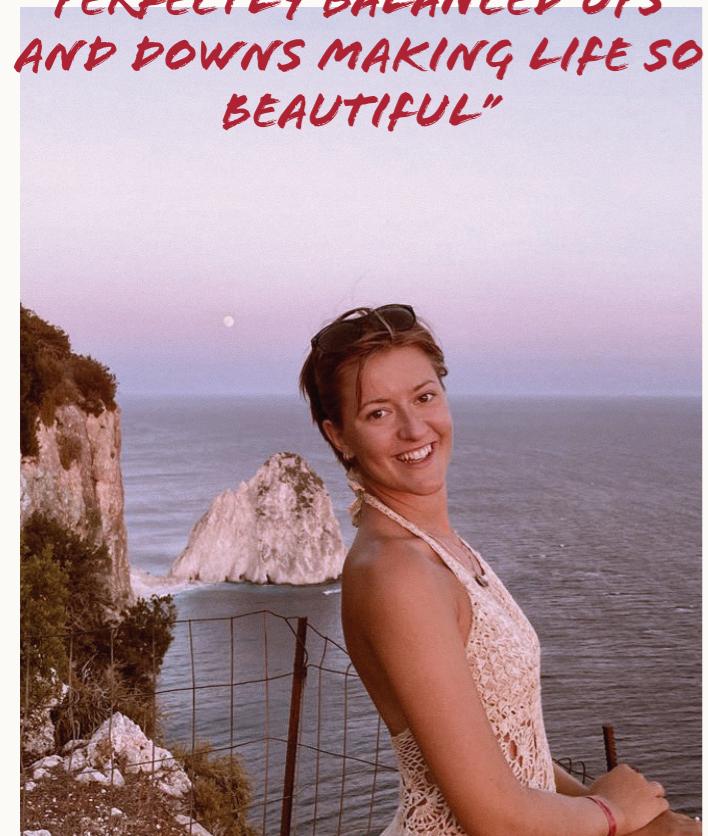


Navigating FOMO: through the creator's lens

Fading filters

Being active on social media takes a lot of effort and time. Especially when you combine it with studying one of the most difficult majors. As is the case for Lucka, a young woman handling her mathematics and physics degree while maintaining her professional social media account. Every person has a different story, but the one they choose to share online varies. Lucka's story started when she was 13 years old, as she created her Instagram profile, Lucy's lifestyle. Throughout the years, she has accomplished many of her goals, both in her online as well as personal life.

"MY LIFE IS LIKE A SINUSOID; PERFECTLY BALANCED UPS AND DOWNS MAKING LIFE SO BEAUTIFUL"



Childhood nostalgia

Starting her social media platform at an early age, Lucka treasures memories full of pure and raw moments when there were no phones to ruin the preciousness of childhood. For her adventurous spirit and sense of spontaneity, Lucka thanks her parents. The two people who have always inspired and encouraged her by also helping her create the initial social media account. After two years of being active, the dream of becoming a successful blogger was not far from becoming a reality, as her account was nominated for the top 10 lifestyle blogs of the year.

"THE PUREST THING ABOUT CHILDHOOD IS EXPERIENCING MOMENTS WITHOUT ANY BOUNDARIES"



Embracing the absence

There have been two stages in life when Lucka encountered the fear of missing out. The first time she felt succumbed to the pressures of it was in elementary school. The time when she had an urge to be part of every situation, which she simply could not do. Her mind would often wander into thoughts about her friends having fun without her. The second stage occurred when she created a social media account, strengthening the fear. It had become much easier to compare her life with the lives of the people she followed. Lucka acknowledges that the feeling is never going to disappear, but she is the one holding the power over how she reacts to it.



"IT IS AN INSEPARABLE PART OF ANY RELATIONSHIP THAT WE ARE NEVER FULLY PRESENT IN SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE EXCEPT OUR OWN"

THE FEAR



"YOU ARE PROVING SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR LIFE TO SOMEONE YOU'VE NEVER MET, CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT"

Modern dealer

A source of dopamine, a strange liberating feeling, and the joy of sharing your life with complete strangers are all different, but they come together in the means of social media. Lucka recognises these feelings but still has a tough time figuring them out. Why are they making us so happy and desperate at the same time? With being followed by many people, Lucka realised that she uses social media as a tool to cope with FOMO. But simultaneously, the content she shares may become the reason for someone else's FOMO. It is a vicious cycle.

"IT'S WEIRD AND SCARY HOW SOMEONE PAYS YOU OR SENDS YOU FOOD FOR POSTING PICTURES"

Through different lens

The cliché goes that being an influencer is not a real job, just a fun pursuit. It is, in fact, an enjoyable way to make a living, but we should not ignore the effort put into it. From Lucka's point of view, the most time-consuming part is the consistency. Without it, there are no interactions with the audience, and she might end up losing her job. As a content creator, every minute spent online works in her favour. Being one herself, Lucka is experiencing constant mind occupation by having the responsibility to deliver content for collaborations; thoughts about the selection of pictures, captions and featuring the offered products.



"SOMETIMES I WONDER IF IT WOULD BE EASIER TO LIVE SUCH A LIFE WHERE YOU KEEP EVERY MEMORY JUST FOR YOURSELF"



Amidst treasure hunt

At some point, every influencer has doubts about the point of it all. Having mixed feelings is no different for Lucka either. She has come such a long way, and there is a very thin line between having one collaboration and having twenty. On the other hand, one thing that she really misses is a mind that is not constantly occupied with content. That in each moment, she did not feel the pressure of sharing it online, she just simply lived. Looking forward to the future, Lucka sees only two things happening. Either she will stay active on Lucka's Lifestyle or delete the app completely.

Authors: Vanesa Vrablova, Mees de Wilde



WHAT'S THE HURRY ABOUT

The wind bellowed through the cracks of the shattered windowpane behind her as ice-cold whispers of snow and glass bit Jose Argus' face like a rabid dog. They were at a standstill. Jose faced her as blood trickled uselessly down her back. She could not move because of the micro disc Jose had just shot spinning in the nape of her neck. But neither she nor the wind were who bellowed in screams of agony, no but Jose's heart.

A winter moonset crept behind tall glass flats as it spied on a borough tucked in the city. A night child was roaming over the road of the neighbourhood with blue bags in her hand and under her eyes. The old moon had hung over her crib, watchfully following her as she grew up, changing a crib for a den, as the borough was home to the girl named after a monster, Jose Argus. She felt doom draw near when she crossed a dark alleyway towards her apartment.

Walking over the main street, small shops were lined one after the other with a closed sign turned to face from their ateliers. Jose listened to the morning doves cooing as she passed huge apartment complexes surrounding each of their respective courtyards, used for mingling and socialising, but quiet then. The mourning doves were in luck as the stray cats held their dumpster fights with crows over mice in numerous alleyways that separated the small blocks of three or four buildings. Glancing up,

the penthouses reflected the sunrise onto the moon with their molten sand walls, but she only got glimpses of it while squinting through an electricity wire hazard. The main road outside on the ground floor had been transformed into one to have Jose's programme run.

She wondered about superstition as a western wind sang a ballad of change and brushed a few loose strands of hair from her carefully curated curls.

She inspected her dead ends wrapped around the tips of her fingers as they burned like yarn, brought too close to the sizzling cigarette she held between her lips. Jose wielded fate over the people living in her borough, like the three Fates themselves. Friends, neighbours, and strangers. She had shot them with a self-made disc applicator, closely resembling a gun, to connect each of their lives to the database controlled from her studio apartment. They had been unsuspecting; shy Jose would never...

She flicked the bud of her cigarette aside, rummaged in her pockets, and retrieved the keys to her flat, when a crack of electricity deafened her eardrums like a guitar plug twisting in an amp. Goosebumps arose on the back of her neck in an instant, just as technology had arisen years ago. The keys fell out of her hands hopelessly, and nostalgia breathed through her nose as she released a heavy sigh.

She had felt hopeless when she found

house, every shop, and every dark alleyway. All to reassure herself that there was nothing to fear or worry about.

The Greek story of her namesake should have warned Jose enough about her envy as a choice. Argus had a hundred eyes and eyed danger as quick as the Goddess of Wisdom Athena could decipher codes, so why had he overlooked the herald of the messenger God Hermes? Was envy to be fought for or fled from?

Aggress or defend. Jose Argus was a warden to her own life because it had been Hermes' sword that bestowed death like a gift. She chose to protect her peace and indefinitely closed her heart off. All to be threatened by a crush, Danique Mercure, who, in the eye of a disc, was parading the main street of the borough like a Trojan horse.

If Danique were given a mirror, she would not move away from the bouquet her narcissus irises reflected. If her entrance was not what gave away her ego the size of the sun, it was how she composed herself. She looked ready to fight for what she believed in, but what that could be, Jose did not know. Jose had crushed enough on her to compare Danique's ever-shining charcoal hair, like it was liquid diamond, to her own burned barbecue ash curls.

Slapping herself from a freezing surprise, Jose focused on moving one disc-controlled robotic-like person first and having the others move like

herself glued to her mattress for weeks, endlessly scrolling past lives she was not living. But conjured jealousy had fuelled a desperate conviction. To be able to make change in her own life, she had to gain control of those around her. Thus, when she glanced over her shoulder and saw only a last sizzle of lightning dancing in a line, she frowned and shook her head, reminded of her achievements. Every person in the borough was paused like a video game, waiting for Jose to return to her console and have them continue their curated lives once more.

It was not until Jose heard the front door to the flat slam shut behind her that she saw something move out over the crossroad outside in the corner of her eye, through the glass-encased stairway that led to her apartment. Yet again, when she looked head-on for a second time, she saw nothing but her own suspicion rise.

Her heart was pounding in her chest, so she climbed two stairs at a time and almost kicked her studio door in to make her way over to her computer and press play.

The once pitch-black studio lit up with roaring monitors and a hundred screens hanging from the ceiling, mounted to the walls, stacked atop one another on the floor, encompassing Jose. Who was hunched over a programming code on a measly-looking laptop when each display around her blinked to broadcast a point of view from every person in the borough?

Her premature grey hair danced like a shell's pearl under the different lights of life. Like the monster Argus Panoptes was, Jose had a hundred sets of eyes at her disposal everywhere in the borough. She commanded every disc to search for an error in every

playable characters on a new command—to secure Danique Mercure at all costs. She was not going to win this fight.

Her computer screen filtered under a muddy brown of mashed autumn leaves, as Jose recognised it as one of her former friends' eyes, Bramwell's. She coded the disc in his nape to signal his peanut-sized brain to move his long limbs, corresponding to Jose's wishes. With her fingers on the keys A, W, D, and Space, Bram's hands grasped for Danique. But in a split second, when Danique's determined face turned towards him, Jose beheld how Danique's eyes lit up with recognition and pity as she yelled, "What?! Bram?!"

"Keep your hands off me, idiot!" She palmed Bram's face and pushed him out of the way like an annoying child, sending him tumbling over the concrete road. Nothing but a grunt slipped from his brain.

Jose bounced her knee and chewed on her lower lip until she tasted metal on her tongue. She rolled her chair back to a window overlooking the street and marked Danique as having already advanced halfway up the road, leaping from left to right to evade all disc'd-up locals of the borough, as a relentless game of tag. Suddenly, Danique's head shot up, locking her gaze with Jose's as she punched a neighbour in the gut, and she shouted, "Jose Argus! I've had enough of your games!"

"What games?" Jose murmured under her breath as she tiptoed her ass while sitting on her chair still, back to her computer. "You're the one interfering. Everything was fine before I met you."

Hurriedly typing away, she searched for another disc to switch to. Because if Jose did not hinder Danique quickly, Jose would be confronted with more than just a crush.

Her screen was filtered in a toxic green like that of a poisonous frog. Must be her neighbour's. No offence to the witch, like crippling Grandma from the floor below her, but Jose switched to another disc. She squealed like a gamer boy, opening a FIFA pack containing a gold footballer, when the dark green of the scrubber side of a sponge filtered over her computer screen. These were the eyes of the black belt teaching karate in the ramshackle of a dojo down the closest alleyway to Jose's apartment.

Bodies were thrown everywhere to get to Danique, and for the first time in Jose's life, she saw a flicker

of panic glint silver like the medal of second place in Danique's eyes as she sized up her component.

Yet Jose had not considered a con on her chosen disc. The black belt may be strong, but the woman is balanced on her heels. She was not fast enough to hug Danique around her waist and lift her off the ground like a mother snatching a sack of rice off a market stall for half price.

Danique Mercure may have dodged a golden card and had her goals surpass luck as she had moved past many discs, but she was careless in underestimating Jose.

She noticed how Danique's gaze focused in on the door to the disc's control room, while every disc still before her was stationed in place, arms outstretched, ready to seize her. But none moved in time, as Danique straight up bolted towards the door. However, she followed the exact route Jose Argus had lined up for her and ran directly into a trap, as if Jose were cat Tom and Danique Mouse Jerry.

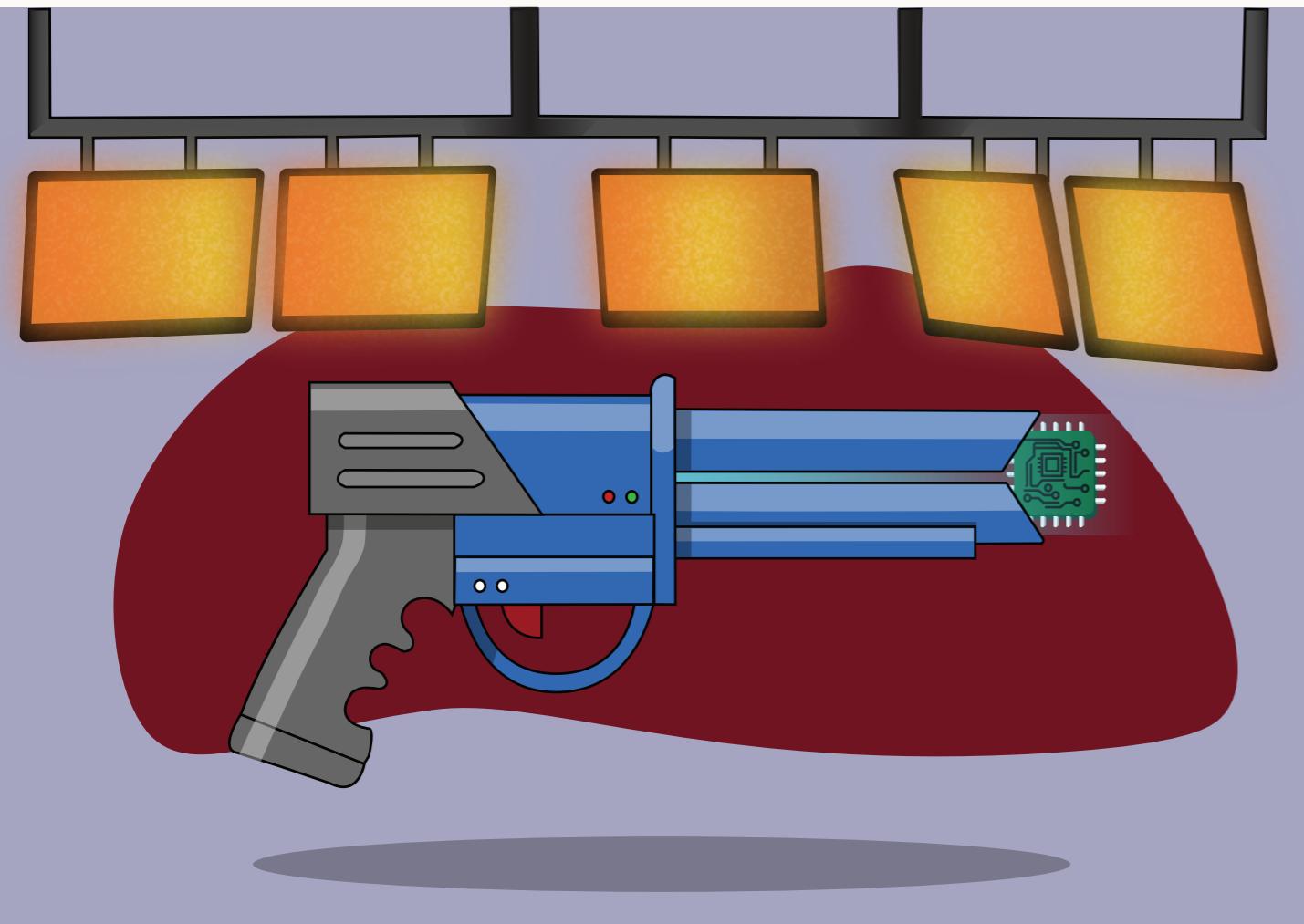
The moon pulled Danique, like the tide, towards the flowerpot next to the apartment complex's front door and pulled the ceramics up, knowing what they held secret. She opened the lock in one go and entered.

She disappeared as Jose blackened the monitors to low power mode and grabbed the disc applicator from her coat pocket, holding it under her chin as she stealthily moved behind the wall of screens in her studio.

She had made the applicator with a 3D printer and electricity threads cut from the light in the hallways. The micro discs were round motherboards, black like mini vinyl, and spinning when connected to a person like a DNA cell, yet only Jose could play them in her control room.

And Jose Argus waited—waited almost long enough to start doubting whether Danique was really coming for her. But as the monitors released their last hum, Jose held her breath when she heard the floorboards in the hallway creak under some weight. Jose's door stood ajar, the lock a hair away from dropping shut as it never closed at once like a well-used refrigerator.

But when a tap of nails pushed the studio door open, Jose's resolve crumbled beneath her feet as a long and loud creak stammered from its hinges. It continued into the tiniest squeak until the handle settled into its personalised indent in the wall with a



dull thud. And the silence continued, spurring Jose's heart on with impatience as she was tempted to roll her eyes and reveal herself from the shadows, hands up, insulting, "Could you be any slower?"

But the circus orchestra halted, and a fine violin strung a voice Jose had not known she had missed: "Come out, come out..."

"Aren't you done hiding in the closet by now, Jose?"

The question wounded her, as if Cupid had fired a rainbow arrow with a gnome on top, to dig for its pot of gold in the crevice of Jose's sock drawer of a ribcage. Because one cannot hide in there. Jose had been as secluded and gay as blinding headlights. But both Danique's asking and Jose's feelings in response to that question concluded into one gospel of screams after one preach. Jose Argus was a threat.

She had watched Danique spin and turn in her room's centre. And as quick as a disc could slide into a radio, clicking as Jose loaded the applicator, faster was Jose in lining up the shot when Danique made a final turn away from Jose, her hair swaying shortly past her ears. Danique had her neck bared behind her, and Jose pulled the trigger. The disc sliced flesh and dug into bone.

But wind bellowed through the cracks of a shattered windowpane behind her, as a brick had been hurled through it from a riot outside. The

sunrise outside sported all colours with pride but burning lampposts and yelling monotone insults out in the borough toned down Jose's world fast.

Ice-cold whispers of snow and glass bit her face like a rabid dog. Crows cawed flying high over the flames, cats hurried home, and mice stopped dancing. Reality was reloading, while Jose Argus and Danique Mercure were at a standstill. Jose faced her as blood trickled uselessly down Danique's back. She could not move because of the micro disc; she just shot it spinning in the nape of her neck. But neither Danique nor the wind are who bellowed in screams of agony. No, but a heart fluttering like a swarm of butterflies in Jose Argus' chest.

As a hallucination spun her vision like the icon of a loading screen, a single computer screen lit up gold. And shown was Jose.

She looked back from the monitor to Danique, whose face contorted briefly from treachery to no emotion at all. Jose hid her shallow breaths with a trembling hand over her own mouth but could not cover up what welled over the apples of her cheeks, staining them with the salt crystals grown from resentment of who she was and always would be.

However, many tears spilled out of her ocean grey eyes, and her eyebrows clashed together in a frown as the yellow lenses rolled back into Danique's head. The one on the computer screen started to melt into



liquid gold and smothered onto every other screen on the wall until honey sweet sunlight poured into the room, brighter than Jose's gay headlights.

The moon had turned itself upside down. And in the blink of an eye, Jose laid flat on the hardwood floor of her IKEA-furnished, retro-inspired apartment with a CD discman playing Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire" through a set of headphones clasping crooked around her ears. She looked around disoriented until a woman, in only an oversized band T and a pair of socks, walked up to her and extended a hand to pull Jose up with a shit-eating grin on her face.

The first verse was listed into the chorus, but bounced off her neck in stereo as Danique Mercure flicked her headphones down and lectured, "What was worth daydreaming about with that fire hazard on your head? Mmh?"

"You, lecturing me about it afterwards," Jose replied with a sly smile, "but accepting my regret on missing out after coming out and reliving my sexual awakening, most certainly was not."

Danique pulled her lover in to shut her up, and Jose Argus fell head over heels again, for the third time.

Contributors



Born and raised in Georgia, a small country in eastern Europe, Barbare is a seventeen-year-old whose appreciation for the creative industries began way back when she got old enough to go to the local movie theatre completely alone and, with her heart pounding, purchased a single ticket. To this day, she is still hooked on the ecstatic feeling she gets in precisely those seconds when the intensity rises as the lights dim at the movie theatre and the projector starts running.

Barbare considers it the most important thing to find your own wave in life, catch it, and follow it to the end with inertia. Figuring out what her personal wave took her to different places and put her in situations that she had never set foot in before, from deep diving into film production to trying herself out in advertising.

The amazement this industry brought her fueled her curiosity so much that it gave her the courage to move to a different country and study there. Accompanied by a strong belief that to not feel the fear of missing out, one has to go with every opportunity they receive, which might result in a fulfilled life with no regrets. Along the way, she tries to transform this fear into a stimulus and uses it as a catalyst that will assist her in proving that creativity is what truly unites all people and shows we have far more in common than that which divides us.

THE TEAM



Freya Willems is a nineteen-year-old creative business student at Breda University of Applied Sciences. Freya is from the harbour city of Vlissingen in the province known for beaches and Bolussen Zeeland, in the Netherlands. The last two years were gap years for Freya, which she spent becoming a florist at her local garden centre to earn enough pocket money to travel through Europe. Freya has visited numerous cities, from Dubrovnik with a group of friends to London with the friendship that made it out of that friend group, and from Berlin to Athens Interrailing by train and bus with her sister. Freya inherited her love for capturing her adventures from her mother, who diligently let Freya watch her baby home videos many mornings before elementary school.

Although Freya spends hours editing her videos and photos for social media, she has always felt a bit afraid of putting her creations out there. She looks up to content creator Emma Chamberlain, who, as Freya put it, 'never misses the opportunity to convey her thoughts and emotions through her editing style.'

However, many doors have started to open for Freya at her bachelor's program. There, she is learning how to navigate the media front like a professional and getting the skills she will not have to be afraid to miss out on anymore.



Mees de Wilde is a 17-year-old student from Leerdam in the Netherlands. Mees is passionate about media, in particular music and film; this makes the creative business programme at BUAS perfect for her. Design and art have always been interesting to her, and she is keen to explore all the different sides of the creative business field. She enjoys being creative, with an interest in photography and editing; therefore, she is interested in working with Photoshop, one of the programmes that has always caught her attention.

On the team, she is the organizer. She likes to make sure that tasks are done the right way and on time. She is quite a perfectionist.

During the past few years, Mees has been struggling with the fear of missing out. She feels like she has been missing out on the best years of her life and tries to not miss anything because this would mean that she would miss out. Raising awareness about mental health issues is something that she finds extremely important. She feels like safe places are needed to discuss issues, and everyone needs to feel seen and included.



Fleur van der Rijken is a seventeen-year-old young student who lives in Oosterhout, the Netherlands, with a passion for designing and all things related to media. Currently following her studies in creative business, Fleur's interests align perfectly with her academic journey, making her a driven student.

From a young age, Fleur exhibited a keen fascination with the ever-evolving world of the media industry. Her love for photography, digital marketing, and creative innovation has been a constant source of inspiration and motivation.

In the age of social media and constant connectivity, Fleur, like many of her peers, wrestles with the fear of missing out. Her desire to be part of the vibrant social scene often clashes with her commitment to her studies. Balancing her academic responsibilities with her longing for social experiences has been a significant part of Fleur's journey.

In this moment, Fleur embraces the uncertainty as an opportunity for exploration. She remains open to diverse possibilities, ready to dive into various sides of media, from content creation and marketing to digital design. Her indecision isn't a barrier; it's an invitation to discover the countless avenues that the media has to offer.



Vanesa is a nineteen-year-old young woman from a city called Dubnica nad Váhom in a small country Slovakia. She went through every stage of her life in the same city with the same people around her. At the age of seventeen she realized she had been living in a box and decided to escape the prejudice. From that point she has not spent any summer at home. She worked in Czech Republic, did a volunteer program in Mexico, participated in Work and Travel in the USA. With her adventurous spirit she always knew studying abroad was something she would pursue one day. As a result, Vanesa has chosen to study in the Netherlands. Founding herself into Creative Business course as she feels like it mirrors her personality.

Dealing with the fear of missing out is a common thing and Vanesa is no exception. She claims a major amount of her decisions are based on fear of missing out. Growing up with social media has a great impact on how your subconscious is programmed. Vanesa is aware of this fact and tries to reduce the usage and impact of social media. Indeed, she has a long and hard journey ahead of her.

don't lose yourself keep your face on



Credits

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Feature story photographs Personal archive

**Feature story illustrations
based on appearance:**

Walking guy Luz Eugenia

Generation-divided zipper Fleur van der Rijken

Silhouette Fleur van der Rijken

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Feature Story Tiko Goguadze
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